

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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March 28, 2000 LB 1405

SENATOR HILGERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members, LB 1405 would ban the use of aborted fetal tissue in the state of Nebraska. This bill has had a lot of coverage, has had a lot of deliberation, a lot of soul-searching by many of the members. It's my belief, again let me state, that our civic culture can withstand an open, honest and engaging debate on the conflict, be it real or perceived or potential, between the rapidly advancing medical science and our contemporary standards of morality and ethics. I believe Nebraska can withstand this debate. I believe the debate is good. I believe public discourse is good. I believe that deliberation is good; this body will ultimately decide if legislation is good. There are many questions to ponder, many questions that this legislation brings up. Should a complete ban be in place? If we choose not to ban the use of aborted fetal tissue for research, if we choose not to draw the line there, where do we draw the line at? Another question, to what extent should or perhaps can the people of Nebraska have in determining policy in our state institutions? To what extent should the people of Nebraska know what their governmental institutions are doing? Should it be public knowledge what policies, what procedures are in place and are being followed? Is there a role for state government to engage in deliberation about rapidly advancing medical issues? Should we simply defer to the federal government to decide what Nebraska will do, defer to federal guidelines, defer to Washington policy boards? Should we simply define our standards and ethics by what is allowed under the Nebraska Revised Statutes? It comes to mind, on the way to work this morning, that we have no problem discussing genetically modified corn. We should have no problem having an open discussion about these medical issues and as they conflict with what a large percentage of our population feels that they are conflicting with their standards. I think we should discuss issues such as these. I would submit to you that, whatever happens to LB 1405, we will be confronted with issues like this in the future, of genetics, of cloning, of other issues that we don't even know about yet. There will be issues that I believe that make LB 1405 look like a cake walk, compared to what some day in the not too distant future Nebraska will be confronted with. Today, LB 1405 raises several questions. LB 1405 is one answer to them; it is up to the body whether they accept this answer. I do believe it's